

Communing with the World
Preacher: Rev. Karen E. Gale
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Communion Is...
Isaiah 55

Communion is about remembering.

Remembering who we were...
Remembering who we are...
Remembering where we are going...

I got out an old Pilgrim picture directory this week. This one was put together in 2011. I looked at the pictures in here. You know what? Some people who are pictured here aren't at church anymore. Some have died and some have moved away. Some left.

But we are still gathering together for communion.

Some of the pictures look really old. Some of the people in here have grown up. Those who were really young now look huge as they've got older. Some of the more mature people here look a bit smaller now because when we get older we shrink a little bit. Some people are not in here because they weren't here yet then, but they are here now.

And we still gather together for communion.

At communion we remember the story. Jesus gathers with the disciples and breaks bread with them. And he has wine with them. This is what they ate all the time, bread and wine. Like pizza and coffee for us. But Jesus stopped them and said, "wait, look, this is special." And he lifted up the bread and the cup and told the disciples, when you gather, do this together. You'll remember our good times and our hard times and what we are trying to do together.

During communion we think about Jesus' last time with his disciples. He died the next day and then was resurrected. So the night before was a sad time. Sometimes during communion we think about people we miss—Jesus knew that when he celebrated the first communion with the disciples, that he was going to miss them a lot.

When we look at this directory we remember who we were as a church. When we step up to the communion table, we remember who Jesus was and his life with the disciples.

When we come forward for communion we remember Jesus and his message for us in this day and age. We remember who we are as Christians trying to follow Jesus' message as the church today.

All the people who gathered together after Jesus' resurrection and they had an amazing experience together and it changed them. All of us who gather here, come together as one in communion and are changed. Empowered. Given light and hope and strength.

We remember who we were, who we are, where we are going...

The early church remembered that Jesus said to love one another and take care of one another. So they started having dinner together. They brought what they had so if someone didn't have enough, they shared.

Hey there! All who are thirsty,
come to the water!
Are you penniless?
Come anyway—buy and eat!
Come, buy your drinks, buy wine and milk.
Buy without money—everything's free!

We do that here, too. Communion reminds us that we are all in this together and take care of one another. I don't actually think communion is limited to this table. It happens in coffee hour and at funeral service receptions, too.

Today is a special time of communion. It is World Wide Communion Sunday. All around the whole world people are doing what we are doing, celebrating communion. And it started way before 10:30 this morning.

Think about what you had for dinner last night. Maybe you started thinking about dinner at 5pm. Well last night, Saturday night, when you were thinking about dinner, it was already Sunday morning in New Zealand. It was 10 am there and New Zealand Christians were gathered together to share bread and the cup to celebrate communion and thank God for the springtime, because it is their spring.

In the middle of last night night, at three o'clock in the morning, who was awake? Not me. But it was mid-morning in Baghdad, Iraq. Chaldean Christians live there. They are Christians who are descended from the first followers of Christ and have lived in Iraq generation after generation. They speak Aramaic, the same language Jesus spoke. As we lay sleeping, they were remembering Christ and sharing the bread and the cup together just as we are.

Just before the sun rose here in Massachusetts, around 6 o'clock this morning, the churches in Dakar, Senegal were celebrating communion. Dakar is where many years ago slaves were put on ships and sent to America. As folks in Senegal remember Jesus in communion, they also remember their difficult history and their connection to African Americans in this country.

At 9 this morning as we were stirring, Christians gathered in Buenos Aires, Argentina in South America. They passed the peace, la paz, and shared communion together and are probably finishing their services right now.

In a little while we will finish our services and go out into the world and the rest of our day. Later today, around two in the afternoon, the Inuit, who used to be called Eskimos, will gather for their services. It will be cold and snowy there. The Inuit will come inside and worship with others and they will warm each other up in body and in spirit. They will lift up the bread and the cup and offer thanks to God as we do.

Right now it is 4am in Hawaii. Later this afternoon and into the evening, Hawaiian Christians will wake up like you did, gather in churches by the beach or up on green hillsides. Many still sing in Hawaiian and pray to Jesus, Iesu, as they remember the last supper and take communion together. They thank God for aloha, or the spirit that unites them together.

So, all over the world today Christians come together around the table. They share bread. They lift up the cup.

They recall God's words in Isaiah:
Listen carefully to my life-giving, life-nourishing words.
I'm making a lasting covenant commitment with you,

the same that I made with David: sure, solid, enduring love.

And in many languages and traditions and practices remember that promise, how it came to pass in the life of Christ. And through it we are all united together. There are not many days in the year when you know that you and Hawaiians and Inuit and Iraqis and Africans and Europeans are all doing the same thing and thinking about each other. That is what communion is at heart. It unites us to each other: the person sitting next to you and those who are far away.

Nations who've never heard of you
will come running to you
As we all gather at this table.

Communion reminds us of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. It gives us hope. Finally, we are given a calling, a job, a task at the communion table. Eating the bread at the communion table is strength for the journey, courage in the face of resistance and oppression, peace in the midst of anguish and conflict, and hope in the darkness.

For God says, "I don't think the way you think.
The way you work isn't the way I work.
For as the sky soars high above earth,
so the way I work surpasses the way you work,
and the way I think is beyond the way you think.
Just as rain and snow descend from the skies
and don't go back until they've watered the earth,
Doing their work of making things grow and blossom,
producing seed for farmers and food for the hungry,
So will the words that come out of my mouth
not come back empty-handed.
They'll do the work I sent them to do,
they'll complete the assignment I gave them.

"So you'll go out in joy,
you'll be led into a whole and complete life.
The mountains and hills will lead the parade,
bursting with song.
All the trees of the forest will join the procession,
exuberant with applause.
No more thistles, but giant sequoias,
no more thornbushes, but stately pines—
Monuments to me, to God,
living and lasting evidence of God."

That's an amazing image. And one that will come into being through the work of your hands,
my hands, our hands.

That's some mighty powerful bread and grape juice.

Thanks be to God for this day, for this meal, for the life of Jesus, for the community of churches, for our connections to a global church. Amen.